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AD CLERUM.

A

VISITATION SERMON

PREACHED

At *Beckonsfield* in the County of *Bucks*, *April* the 9th. 1678.

By JOHN JAMES, *A. M. Rector of* Latimers *in the County of* Bucks.

LONDON,

Printed by *T. H.* for *R. Chiswel*, at the Rose and Crown in St. *Paul's Church-yard*, 1678.

Imprimatur,

Geo. Thorp. R^mo. in C. P. D. Domino *Gulielmo* Archiep. *Cant.* a Sacris Domesticis.

May 31. 1678.

1 Cor. 4. 1, 2.

Let a man so account of us, as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in Stewards, that a man be found faithful.

SAint *Paul* having planted Christianity among the *Corinthians*, by preaching the Gospel of Christ in the City of *Corinth*, and other adjacent Provinces in the Countrey of *Greece*; after the space of Eighteen Months he departed from those Regions, and took his Journey into *Asia*, where he also delivered what he had received from the Lord, and instructed the People both publickly in the Synagogues, and privately in their Houses, in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God: Immediately after his departure, *Apollos* being by *Priscilla* and *Aquila*, sufficiently instructed in the Doctrine of the Gospel upon his coming to *Ephesus*, is by them recommended and sent to the Brethren at *Achaia*, where he boldly delivered and diligently taught the things of the Lord; confirming those who were converted by the Ministry of St. *Paul*, in the grounds and principles of the Christian faith, and by arguments unanswerable confuting the most obstinate *Jews*, and putting to silence publickly in the Synagogues the most subtle and shrewdest Disputants among them, *Acts* 18. *vers.* 24 *&c.*

But though *Paul* had planted the Christian Religi-

on, in converting many by the preaching of the Gospel to be Proselytes to it, and *Apollos* after him, had watered those Converts, in contributing his utmost assistance to settle and establish them on the Foundation which *Paul* had laid, though God himself had given increase in making their labours effectual by the blessed influence of his Spirit, to obtain those great ends he designed, in the promulgation of the Gospel; to wit, the Conversion and Edification of Souls, in the faith of Christ; yet, in a short time the heat of their Devotion began to be abated, or rather to be misimployed upon improper objects: For those which had enrolled themselves into the same Society, professed and were Baptized into the same faith, and so became members of the same mystical body; broke forth into furious contentions & animosities against each other, rendring most miserably, and most cruelly tearing the Church of Christ to pieces in its very Infancy; for through the enmity of those impure *Gnosticks*, against the Rules and Precepts of Christianity, and the malice of the Judaizing Christians, against many points of Doctrine contained therein; most lamentable Schisms and Factions broke forth in the Church of *Corinth*, which like flames of Fire were ready to consume and burn it down to the ground; Errors and Heresies were scattered abroad, and greedily received by too many among them, which like ill Weeds soon grew up, and brought forth most unwholsom fruit in their lives and manners.

This sad news no sooner came to the Ears of our Apostle, but it sunk heavily down upon his Soul, and made a deep impression of sorrow upon his minde; therefore to redress these mischiefs, and if possible, to settle the distractions and divisions of *Corinth*, he presently

presently composeth and directs this Epistle to the Church there, and to all other Christians both *Jews* and *Gentiles* inhabiting the Regions of *Achaia*, in which after a Religious and most affectionate Salutation to procure from them a favourable Audience, and a candid entertainment of what he delivered, from *v.* 1. to *v.* 9. He most earnestly exhorts them to an Unity in Doctrine and brotherly Communion one among another; *vers.* 10, 11. And then laying open before their eyes the grievousness of their Schism, he charges them boldly with it to their very faces, *vers.* 11, 12, 13. Telling them plainly that the Christian Religion is but one, and Christ Jesus the only Author of it: That the excellency of it is such, that though it be not ushered into the World with sublimity of speech, and the Ornaments of humane wisdom, and therefore is styled the foolishness of Preaching, and by the learned Scribes, and wise Disputers of the World, was rejected with pride and insolence; yet, it consisteth in the power of God, and so far excelleth the wisdom of this World, that it destroys the understanding of the Wise and Prudent, and confounds the things that are Mighty and Noble: Chap. 1. 2. That as Christ is the Author of this Divine Institution, so he is the only proper Foundation for men to lay the Superstructure of their Faith and Salvation upon; and according to the expression of St. *Peter*, Acts 4. 12. *The only Name under Heaven given among Men, whereby they should be called:* And consequently that those who labour in the Church of Christ, have no dominion over the Faith of men, or authority to command their Consciences; notwithstanding they are Ministers of Christ, and fellow-labourers together with God: Stewards in the Houshold of Faith, and Dispensers of the Mysteries of the Gospel;

Gospel; and therefore as men are obliged to shew them their respective and just esteem, but not to transcend its prescribed limits and bounds, so 'tis required these be faithful in their Office, and Conscientious in the discharge of so Sacred a Function: which as 'tis a prevalent means to repair the breaches and cure the divisions in the Church of Christ, so 'tis the advice of the Apostles to the *Corinthians*, and the immediate design of the words in my Text. *Let a man so account of us*, &c.

That my discourse may be full and comprehensive, proportionable to the just design and import of these words; and serviceable in some measure to the present occasion, and future necessities of this Assembly; Three things necessarily require our consideration: First, The Subjects of the Apostles discourse implyed under the Pronoun, *Us*. Secondly, The matter predicated of, or attributed to these Persons: *The Ministers of Christ and Stewards of the Mysteries*; both which Particulars joyned together, make up an entire Proposition; that the Persons intended by the Apostle, *are the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God*. Thirdly, Practical Inferences deduced from the truth of the Apostles assertion, one respecting the men to whom these persons are employed as *Ministers and Stewards*: *Let a man so account of us, as of* —— The other relating to the Persons themselves, to whom their Office is committed. *Moreover 'tis required in Stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

First, We shall consider the subjects of the Apostles discourse, implyed under the Pronoun, *Us*: The Persons here intended, being the very Foundation of the Apostles Argument, and a just determination of this Particular, the most regular and orderly Method to assist

assist us in the undertaking, and progress of our present employment. 'Tis certain, that the Persons spoken of, whom St. *Paul* did directly and immediately respect are those mentioned, Chap. 3. *vers.* 22. *Paul*, *Apollos* and *Cephas*, who were separated by the Lord for the work of the Ministry, and appointed as subservient to the Faith and Salvation of the *Corinthians*; but that this particular direction to the Church of *Corinth* may be of larger use and service to the Church of Christ in general, 'tis most rational and consentaneous to the whole scope and tenure of the Gospel, to affirm, that all those, who according to the Canons of Christ and the Apostles, are consecrated to the same imployment, are invested with the same Authority and Office, implicitely included in the expression of the Apostle, and therefore as justly styled, Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Gospel, as *Paul*, or *Apollos* or *Cephas* were.

And if particular Commission be necessary to constitute the Offices of the holy Order, the Negative holds as infallibly true as the Affirmative, that no person may presume to administer any Office appropriate to this sacred Function, but those who are Legally called to, and Canonically invested with it: for the Gospel, almost as oft as occasion is offered to make mention of the Ministers and dispensers of it, plainly intimates, that the Master of our Religion, designs a separation of persons from secular employments, to officiate in the Ministry and Preaching of the Gospel, as in 1 *Cor.* 12. The Apostle resembles the Church to a Body, which is constituted of several Members, and every one designed to serve in its proper place for the benefit and advantage of the whole; that the foot cannot usurp the Office of the Head, nor

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the Arm exerciſe the Authority of the Brain; but every one diſcharge its proper Function; that there be no Schiſm nor Diviſion in the body; in proportion to which ſimilitude the ſtate of Chriſt's myſtical body is to be underſtood, in which every the meaneſt Chriſtian is a Member in particular, but every Member cannot diſpoſe and regulate the affairs of the whole; *For are all Apoſtles? are all Prophets? are all Teachers? do all ſpeak with Tongues? do all Interpret?* Verſ. 29. 30. *Shall the foot ſay, Unleſs I am head, I will not be of the Body? Or the ear ſay, Becauſe I am not the eye, I am not ſufficiently honored? If the whole Body were an eye, where were the hearing? And if every Member were the Head, where were the Body? But God hath ſet the Members every one in the Body as it hath pleaſed him,* Verſ. 16, 17, 18. *Firſt Apoſtles, Secondarily Prophets, Thirdly Teachers,* Verſ. 28. And that this diſtinction ſhould remain in the Church to the end of the World, is confidently confirmed by the Apoſtle, *Epheſ.* 4. 11, 12, 13. Wherein he declares, that the Officers of the Church therein mentioned to be given for the perfecting of the Saints, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt, *&c.* Which Phraſes muſt of neceſſity denote their continuance in the Church, till the number of Gods Elect are accompliſhed, and the ſtate of Chriſts myſtical Body perfectly compleated; and for this reaſon St. *Paul* juſtifies his ſpecial deſignation to the Apoſtleſhip, 1 *Tim.* 2. 7. And St. *Peter* exhorts his *Presbyters* to continual diligence in their imployment, as their proper and neceſſary duty, 1 *Pet.* 5. 1, 2.

And inded if we ſearch into the ancient Records of the World; or conſider the account, which Modern Hiſtorians have privately collected, and publickly preſented to us, the moſt learned and faithfull among them,

them, do confidently assure us, that never any Nation in the World, made a publick profession of Religion, but the Governours thereof solemnly appointed a separation of Persons, whose constant employment it should be to Solemnize and Celebrate the Mysteries thereof; and *Moses* in transcribing the History of the Church of God, both before and after the Floud, and under the admistration of the Law, hath recorded the observation of the same custom, in those several forms of Church-government; thus *Enoch* and *Noah*, were Preachers of Righteousness to the old World; *Abraham*, and the succeeding Patriarchs were Kings and Priests, in their respective Families, and duly administred the affairs of Religion to their several charges: And when God erected his Theocratical Government over the *Jews*, whom he had chosen for his own People, he commanded *Aaron* and his Sons to be set apart for the Priests Office, that they might wait at the Altar of the Lord, and Minister to the People in Holy things, which was appointed a Statute unto him, and to his Seed after him for evermore, *Exod.* 28.1, 43.

And if the Christian Religion must be denyed this honour, and no such Custom observed in the Church of Christ; this strange innovation must be grounded upon one or both of these reasons, either that it contains matters of less value and concernment to Christians, than the Religion of other Nations to the Proselytes of it: Or else that they are so plain easie in all and every particular Doctrine, that the meanest understanding can comprehend their most intimous sence and meaning, and 'tis impossible for the most illiterate to be deceived in his judgment concerning them. These are the fairest pretences that can be alledged against the necessary distinction of the Ministerial Office, yet

their weakneſs is apparent at the firſt view, and their abſurdity ſo groſs, that it may palpably be felt: For the Goſpel of Chriſt is ſo far from deſerving this reproach and contempt, that it contains matters of the greateſt moment and importance for Man to know; ſuch as are the excellency of the Divine Nature, the ſtate and condition of mans Soul; and that incomparable Method contrived by the Divine Wiſdom for mans eternal happineſs; comprehends matters of the moſt univerſal Satisfaction to the minds of men, and propounds the duties of a Practical Religion, which are moſt agreeable to the Divine Nature to require, and moſt reaſonable for Mankind to obſerve; in all which reſpects it infinitely tranſcends all the Platforms of Religion entertain'd in the World, and even the worſhip of the *Jews* themſelves; and though thoſe Practical points which are eſſentially neceſſary to mans Salvation, are extremely ſuitable to the dictates of right reaſon, and delivered with the greateſt perſpicuity and clearneſs imaginable; yet, it diſcourſeth concerning points of Faith, of the greateſt depth and myſteriouſneſs which are altogether inconceiveable and incomprehenſible, and do exceed the apprehenſions of any created Being; ſuch are the Eternal purpoſes and decrees of God, the Doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, with other Doctrines of like affinity, ſcattered up and down the Goſpel; for ſo St. *Peter* tell us, That in the Epiſtles of St. *Paul*, are ſome things hard to be underſtood, which they that are unlearned and unſtable ſo wreſt, as they do alſo the other Scriptures to their own deſtruction, 2 *Pet.* 3. 16. What can be ſpoken of ſuch infinite importance? What can be delivered of ſo tremendous conſequence, as the Chriſtian Religion? And ſhall not the ſacred

Offices

Offices of ſo Divine an Inſtitution, be handled with the moſt awful Solemnity, and Celebrated with the greateſt reverence and moſt Religious adoration imaginable? And when many ſtumble at this Rock of offence and miſcarry at the ſight of thoſe wonderfull things repreſented therein, is it not extremely neceſſary that men of the greateſt wiſdom and gravity be Conſecrated for the work of the Miniſtry; that they may improve their time and abilities for a right underſtanding of the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith, and then employ the Talent of their Wiſdom and Knowledge, for the information and direction of others; that men may not promiſcuouſly intermeddle with thoſe Holy Offices, nor any man after the ſtricteſt diſtinction of Paſtour and People: go aſtray through want of inſtruction, and periſh for want of underſtanding?

But becauſe the ſubject of our preſent Argument reſpects a Matter of Fact; and to diſcourſe only *de Jure* concerning the Ordinances of Chriſt is inſufficient to our preſent purpoſe; let us conſider what the Maſter of our Religion hath *de facto* determined concerning the Miniſterial Office; the firſt remarkable Inſtance that affords any light to this diſquiſition, is the Election and nomination of Apoſtles, recorded *Mark* 3. 13. *Luk.* 6. 13. Whoſe Commiſſion is granted by their Lord and Maſter, *Matth.* 10. 1. *Luk.* 9. 1. After this, *Luk.* 10. 1. *He called his Seventy Diſciples, to whom he gave Commiſſion to Preach the Goſpel*; theſe were the only Perſons which that ſupreme Head of the Church Ordained in Perſon; and to theſe he gave Commiſſion to execute the Miniſterial Office, as their proper and peculiar Function; the Twelve Apoſtles, and the Seventy-two Diſciples:

And that these sacred Orders might remain in the Church to the end of the World; when he first appeared to an Assembly of his Apostles, after his Resurrection, he breathed on them the Holy Ghost, and thereby invested them with full Authority to execute the Pastoral Office, for the Ordering and Governing his Church, which his Father had committed to him, *Joh.* 20. 21, 22. *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*; which immediately before his Assention he again renews, with a plain intimation of the continuance of that Order; and consequently the necessity of Ordaining men to succeed them in it, till all things should be fulfilled, *Mat.* 28. 18, 19, 20.

And that the Apostles understood their Master in this sence is apparent, because as necessity required through the death of the present Officers or the larger groweth and extent of the Church, they Assembled together, and exercised Episcopal Authority in Ordaining others to that Holy employment. Thus they Consecrated *Matthias*, though he were Elected by God himself, into the place of *Judas*, and he was numbered with the Eleven Apostles, *Acts* 1. 25. And though St. *Paul* was a singular Instance of an immediate miraculous Call, when by a voice from Heaven he was made an Apostle; yet, he began not to Preach the Gospel, till *Ananias* had put his hands on him, and prayed over him, that he might be filled with the Holy Ghost, *Acts* 9. 17. And when the *Gentiles* had received the Gospel through the dispersion of the Christians upon the prosecution of St. *Stephen*; the Apostles remaining still at *Jerusalem*, sent forth *Barnabas*, that he should go to *Antioch*, who finding *Saul* at *Tarsus*, joyned together, and mightily confirmed

firmed the Believers there, *Acts* 11. And in the Thirteenth Chapter, these Two men were solemnly Ordained Apostles of the *Gentiles* by those Apostolical Persons mentioned, *Vers.* 1. To all which agrees that Rule of the Apostle, comprised in the Interrogation of St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 10. 15. *How shall they Preach except they be sent?* (*i.e.*) They have no Authority, and can expect no blessing upon their labours, till they have a lawful Commission to set them on work. To which practice of the Apostles, the Primitive, and all succeding Churches in Christendom, till some Zealots of late, have justly confirmed, as all Ecclesiasti al Histories do fully testifie; and thus St. *Clemens*, contemporary, with Saint *Paul* in his Epistle to the *Corinthians* hath left on Record: That the Apostles first Ordained Ministers in Churches, and gave command, that as any were removed by death, the most deserving Persons should be Chosen into their place, and Ordained to execute their Office. Now certainly, the Example and approbation of so great a Cloud of Witnesses, is not only a sufficient Warrant, but a just Authority to regulate the affairs of the Church, according to their Pattern, to the Worlds end. So that I may lawfully assume my designed Proposition, and confidently deliver it as a just and regular Conclusion, that whatever Persons have been successively Ordained into, or at present invested with the Sacred Order of the Ministerial Office, by imposition of hands from Regular Bishops and their *Presbyters*; such men from the Authority of Apostolical practice, are to all intents and purposes the Ministers of Christ, and most properly Stewards of the Gospel; and that all other persons, whatever be their Natural abilities, their Supernatural Graces, their acquired parts,

οἱ Ἀπόστολοἡμῶν κατέστησαν τοὺς προειρημένους, καὶ μεταξὺ ὀπινομὴν δεδώδασιν, ὅπως ἐὰν κοιμηθῶσιν, διαδέξωνται ἕτεροι δεδοκιμασμένοι ἄνδρες τὴν λειτουργίαν αὐτῶν.

parts, or their great experience in Church-affairs, have lot or portion as Agents in these matters, till they receive Commission from good Authority; and which is more considerable, do willfully cast themselves out of the Chuch of Christ, whilst they reject and disown his lawfull Ministers; which was the Judgment of that most ancient Father, St. *Ignatius*,

Epist. ad Trall. P. 50. ὁ ἐκλὸς θυσιαστηρίου ὢν, καθαρὸς ἐστιν, ὁ δὲ ἐκλὸς ὢν, ὁ καθαρὸς ἐστιν. τοῦτ' ἐστιν, ὁ χωρὶς Ἐπισκόπου, καὶ Πρεσβυτερίου, καὶ διακόνου πράσσων τι, ἕτος ὁ καθαρὸς ἐστιν τῇ συνειδήσει. So that it was not without great reason, that that blessed Martyr called upon the Church of *Philadelphia*, with such zeal and importunity.

Epist. ad Philad. P. 43. Τῷ Ἐπισκόπῳ προσέχετε, καὶ τῷ Πρεσβυτερίῳ, καὶ διακόνοις. χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου μηδὲν ποιεῖτε.

What shall we then think of the insolence of those men, who Sacrilegiously usurp the Ministerial Authority, being neither sent by men, nor as they pretend, called by God? I mean those illiterate, but conceited Mechanicks, who being ingaged in some civil Calling as the business and employment o their lives presume to be Masters of Divinity, and Teachers in the business of Religion; as if Divine Knowledge were in this latter and declining age of the World, conveyed into the minds of men, by the working of Miracles, through an immediate inspiration; or the Sacred Mysteries of Christianity were exposed by Christ without any Guardian to the open World, to be prostituted to, and desecrated by any the most common or unsanctified Persons. 'Tis true that the Prophecies of the Old Testament might be fulfilled, and to illustrate the glory of the New; in the beginning of the Christian World, God did communicate extraordinary gifts, even to mean and ordinary persons, who being inspired by the Holy Ghost did extraregularly Prophesie, or Interpret, or speak with Tongues, *Acts* 2.17. For so it was spoken by

By the Prophet, *Joel.* 2. 28. But as they were but few, beſide the Officers of the Church, to whom God diſpenſed thoſe miraculous gifts, ſo they did not pretend to aſſume the Miniſteiral Office, nor preſume to execute any part thereof, but only altered the inſpired Dictates of the Holy Ghoſt, for which their extraordinary endowments were a ſufficient Commiſſion, and when thoſe ceaſed, the men returned to their former condition.

And 'tis agreed by all, that there are but two ways, by which men may enter into the Office Miniſterial, by immediate Command from God, or mediate Commiſſion from men; at the firſt Plantation of the Goſpel, thoſe extraordinary Miniſters were admitted to their Function by an extraordinary Call from Heaven; but becauſe God cannot work in vain, and will not multiply Miracles without juſt neceſſity; that other Method of initiating Church-Officers, is by Divine appointment eſtabliſhed in the Church, I mean the Impoſition of hands with the prayers of the Superiour Clergy, which Form as 'tis more ordinary than the former, ſo 'tis ſufficient for its purpoſe, and fairly correſpondent to the perpetual Rules of a ſetled and eſtabliſhed Religion; the former Miniſters gave evidence of their Ordination by their miraculous Operations; the latter muſt if at all, by the Teſtimonials of the *Presbytery*, of whom they are ordained: therefore I cannot but ask thoſe bold Pretenders, by what Authority they exerciſe thoſe ſtrange and irregular courſes, and who gave them that Authority, that ſix days in the week they ſhall labour and do all that they have to do in their Secular employments; and behold on the Seventh, they ſit as Maſters of Aſſemblies, or ſtand forth as Preachers in a Congregation;

tion; if they receive their power from God, let them come forth and produce their evidences; let them in the name of Christ do wonders, and work Miracles; then we will imbrace them as Apostles, and give them the right hand of fellowship; otherwise 'tis certain, they are not the Messengers of God; if they derive it from men, I ask from whom? From the Bishops and *Presbyters?* Who are intrusted with the Office of Ordination, as being competent Judges of the qualifications of men for Spiritual Ministries? If not from them, they are Invaders and Intruders into the Offices of the Church, and in the language of Christ himself, *Thieves and Robbers*, Joh. 10. 1. But if they will usurp the Priestly Office, which belongs not to them; and take the Censer into their hands, when Christ forbids them, Let them remember, that *Nadab* and *Abihu* perished by Fire; and *Corah* with his complices were swallowed up alive into the Earth, for committing such things; and though their pretences may be fair, and their designs honest; yet *Uzzah* was smitten for his indiscreet zeal, and died, though his intent was good: And if the word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every trangression received a just recompence of reward, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall they be thought worthy, who have troden under foot the Laws of Christ, and counted the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing, and done despight to the Spirit of Graces.

From the Subjects of the Apostles Discourse, we proceed to consider the Matter predicated of, or attributed to them, which was the second Particular delivered from the Words; and the other part of the Proposition implicitel ycontained in them, *They are the Ministers*

Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God; the proper intent and purpoſe whereof is really the ſame, to repreſent the juſt Authority of the Miniſterial Office; yet becauſe 'tis a complex Propoſition, the parts whereof are not in all reſpects coincident, and a reall difference is apparent in them, they may juſtlybe ſevered in our conſideration of them, and therefore ſhall be handled apart in our intended diſcourſe upon them; the former reſpects the Authority and Commiſſion of Miniſters, *They are the Miniſters of Chriſt*: the latter their Office and employment: *They are the Stewards of the Myſteries of God.*

Firſt, Conſider the Authority and Commiſſion of the Perſons in the Text: the Apoſtles and their Succeſſors are the Miniſters of Chriſt: the former ordained by Chriſt in Perſon, or by an immediate Command from Heaven; the latter regularly inveſted with ſame Commiſſion by the ſolemn Prayers of the Church, and Impoſition of hands by the principal Officers thereof; which was the Form of Ordination exerciſed by the Apoſtles themſelves, and other Perſons in their Generations (as hath been already ſufficiently demonſtrated) the practice whereof muſt neceſſarily be a ſufficient Authority to Conſecrate others in the ſucceeding ages of the Church, and all ſuch Perſons by virtue of that Apoſtolical Inſtitution regularly ordained according to the will of Chriſt, and without all controverſie acknowledged by him, as his Servants and Miniſters.

For as Men and Angels were ſometimes employed by God, as Miniſters and Agents in the delivery of ſome Meſſage, as conveying ſome bleſſing to the World before the Incarnation of Chriſt; ſo our bleſſed Lord, that abſolute and ſupream Monarch of the

Church, in imitation of his Heavenly Father, call'd to his assistance a certain number of Persons, to act the part of Ministerial Officers under him the great Diocesan, and Bishop of mens Souls; and after his departure from the world, and Ascension into Heaven, poured down the Holy Ghost upon a full Congregation of them as they were Assembled to Solemnize the worship of God, *Acts* 2. By whose descent they were immediately taught from God, inspired infallibly to Preach the Gospel, to confirm it by Miracles, and had a gracious promise, that the same blessed Spirit should attend them and their Successors to the Worlds end; and accordingly when a compleat body of Religion was perfected, and the Scripture finished, yea, so that that extraordinary work of supernatural Revelation ceased; the Apostles in the name of Christ Ordained a degree of men to succeed them in Ordinary in that honourable Function of the Ministry, whose it is to Rule under Christ over the several Flocks, and to speak unto them the Word of God; which account we receive from St. *Clemens* Bishop of *Rome*; that as Christ was the Angel of God under the second Covenant; so the Apostles were the Messengers of Christ, who being filled with the Holy Ghost, went forth and Preached the Kingdom of Heaven; and as the number of Converts increased, Constituted the most eminent and worthy Christians to edifie the Church, and perfect the body of Christ: from hence the Holy Ghost describes these persons by those Phrases and Expressions, which denote their relation to Christ to be like that of a Servant to a Master, or a Steward to a Lord; for so they are styled Ἀπόστολοι, Messengers, that Receive Commission from him to exercise Authority in his name over the Church;

Οἱ Ἀπόστολοι ἡμῶν εὐηγγελίσησαν ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐξήνεγκον οὖν ἀμφότερα εὐτάκτως ἐκ θελήματος Θεοῦ. Καθ' χώρας οὖν καὶ πόλεις κηρύσσοντες καθίσασον τὰς ἀπαρχὰς αὐτῶν εἰς Ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους τῶν μελλόντων πιστεύειν.

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Μαθηταὶ, Disciples or followers of Christ as their Lord and Master; πρεσβῦται, Legates, or Ambassadours to deliver some Message from their Heavenly Soveraign to poor distressed mortals here on Earth; Parallel to which are those other Appellations of Ἄγγελοι, ὑπηρέται, Ἅγιοι, διάκονοι, all which are used with reference to those immediate Officers of Christ, who were employed as Commissioners under him, and sent with Authority from him, to treat with their fellow-Creatures in the business of Religion, and to communicate the Mysteries of the Gospel to them; which by a just Analogy may also be attributed to all succeeding Ministers, who are legally appointed to serve at the Altar of Christ, and to Minister to his People in Sacred things.

Which is the second part of the Proposition, and respects the Office and employment of the Persons spoken of in the Text, *They are the Stewards of the Mysteries of God*; that the Gospel of Christ or the Doctrine of Christianity is intended under this Phrase, will most evidently appear, if we compare this Expression of the Apostle with others of the like Nature; and then consider the most genuine import and signification of them: in *Col.* 2. 2. the Apostle professing his ardent Zeal and Sollicitude for the Church of God at *Colossi*, and *Laodicea*, inserteth this very expression into his prayer for them, that they might be united with one accord, into the the knowledge and profession of the Mysteries of God; of which he affirms in the next Verse, That all Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge are contained in them, the same he calls their Faith in Christ, *Vers.* 5. And receiving Christ Jesus the Lord, *Vers.* 6. Which Phrases can admit of no other Exposition to explicate their sence

and meaning, than to signifie the Christian Doctrine, which at the first was delivered by the Lord, and afterwards confirmed and perfected by them that heard him; Parallel to which is that Illustrious Aphorism of St. *Paul*, 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. Great is the Mystery of Godliness; that is, the Religion of Christ, which prescribes the most excellent and perfect Rules of Piety; and that this notion requires so general a signification appears, by the several branches enumerated by the Apostle, as a Basis or Foundation to support the Church of God, which were the common received Articles of the Christian Religion.

For that men might not wander eternall in the dark, and an everlasting blindness possess their Souls; it hath pleased the infinitely Wise and Gracious God to communicate to the World, by Divine Revelation many sublime and mysterious points, and whatever else is necessary to be believed and observed in order to Mens Salvation; and that these things might be perpetuated to the World, and secured from the corruptions or invasions of Enemies, it seemed good to the Holy Ghost to commit them to writing in the Sacred Records of Holy Scripture; which by an especiall providence are preserved entire to this very day in the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament; which latter was the only Foundation laid by the Apostles; and therefore the Catalogue of Books contained therein, the sum and substance of the Christian Faith, which St. *Paul* saith, was made manifest and known to the Saints; and so certainly could not remain in unwritten Traditions; for then it would have been hid from the World, *Rom.* 16. 26. And another Apostle calls it the Faith, once, or at once delivered, *Jude* 3. Which directly

oppoſeth any Innovation or Introduction of Doctrines into the Goſpel after its conſummation by the Apoſtles; which is an aſſertion of ſuch Catholick verity, that all the Writers in the Church of Chriſt have conſtantly acknowledged it, till thoſe few perſons in the late Councel of *Trent* durſt venture to reject the univerſal Tradition of the Church, and run counter with the beſt Antiquity; which is plainly demonſtrated by the incomparable induſtry, and elaborate inquiry of the late Reverend Biſhop of *Durham*, in his Scholaſtical Hiſtory of the Canon of Holy Scripture.

So that, though the Writings of Apocryphical Authors may be Read in the Church of God, for example of life, and inſtruction of manners; yet, the Governours of our Church in Compiling her publick Liturgy, have appointed no part of thoſe Books to be Read, but what is agreeable to Canonical Scripture; and always accounted their Authority too weak to lay any Foundation for, or to eſtabliſh any neceſſary Doctrine upon: Which was the Judgment of Saint *Jerome*, concerning this matter, who was alſo the moſt ſtrenuous Aſſertor of the certain and indubitate Catalogue of Holy Writers; for, ſpeaking of the Writings of Apocrypha, he ſaith, *Legit quidem Eccleſia, ſed eas inter Canonicas non recipit*, and though we receive the Name and Number of Canonical Books from the Authority of humane Tradition, and upon the ſame credit believe thoſe Copies which now we enjoy, to be Authentick, and in all material parts agreeable to the moſt Primitive Writings of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles; yet we dare not receive the Traditions of men, as the Doctrine of God; nay, we utterly reject ſuch Impoſitions, as preſumptuous

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and impudent, and are afraid of the Curſe of God, if we ſhould receive them as Articles of Faith; becauſe the Holy Ghoſt in the Comſummation of the Goſpel, hath conſign'd and Sealed it up with an *Anathema*, *Rev.* 22. 18, 19. *Iteſtifie*, &c. Therefore the Church of *England* according to the practice of the Catholick Church in all Ages, ſince the time of the Apoſtles, hath preſcribed the ſame Canon of Scripture, and utterly diſclaimed all pretence of Adition to, or Detraction from it, as 'tis recited in the Sixth Article of our Religion. So that the written Word of God, the Sacred Records of the Goſpel, the ſeveral Contents therein, the various parts thereof, and no other Writings or Traditions whatſoever are that *depoſitum* committed to the charge of all Miniſterial Officers, whoſe duty it is to preſerve and improve the ſame according to the pleaſure of their Lord and Maſter; for this purpoſe they are conſtituted Stewards of God, and Diſpenſers of Holy Myſteries; thus St. *Paul* affirms in general, 2 *Cor.* 5. 18, 19, 20. *God hath given Us the Miniſtry of Reconciliation, and committed to Us the Word of Peace, that we are Ambaſſadours for Chriſt, to pray men in Chriſts ſtead to be reconciled unto God*; and in particular, proclaims of himſelf, that he was appointed a Preacher of the Goſpel, and an Apoſtle, and a Teacher of the *Gentiles*, 2 *Tim.* 1. 11. And for this reaſon he exhorts *Timothy*, to ſtir up the gift of God which was in him, by the putting on of his hands, to hold faſt the form of ſound words, which he had heard of him, and to keep by the Holy Ghoſt, the good thing which was committed to him, *Verſ.* 6, 13, 14. To which agrees that deſcription of a Miniſter or Preſident in Sacred affairs delivered by that Myſtical Divine, that he is the

the proper Interpreter of Divine Theology, and the Angel of Almighty God, being to learn from those Divinely inspired Oracles, and then to teach and explain them to the Church.

Ὁ θεῖος ἱεράρχης ἐκφαντορικὸς ἐστὶν τῶν θεαρχικῶν δικαιωμάτων, ἄγγελος τοῦ Κυρίου ἐστὶ, μανθάνων οὖν ἐκ τῶν θεοπαραδότων λογίων, ἐκφαντορικῶς ἐμφαίνει.

And if the Commission of those Apostolical Persons be restrained within the prescription of certain bounds, that they durst not go beyond the command of the Lord, to do either good or bad of their own mind, had power to say nothing in the name of Christ, but what he communicated to them by Divine Inspiration, and none to diminish ought of what he bid them speak, (for though they enjoyed under Christ the greatest preheminence imaginable in Relious affairs; yet they durst not detract from, or add to the will of God, by Preaching up their own fancies, and the imaginations of their own Brains; this St. *Paul* professeth of himself, 1 *Cor.* 2. 1. *to* 7. And both the Evangelists and Apostles do seriously protest, that whatever they delivered to the World (as to all the main and necessary parts of Doctrine) they received it from Christ in Person, or by Revelation from the Holy Ghost; as we may well believe, considering those miraculous gifts and graces, which were communicated to them; which was an irrefragable demonstration of the Spirit and Power of God, by which they spake;) 'tis highly absurd to imagine that their Successors should have greater liberty in the Church of Christ, and especially at such a vast distance of time from the propagation of the Gospel and the cessation of Miracles; indeed it might be deservedly accounted a Miracle, not the least, if we should be Soveraign Lords over mens Consciences, or have absolute dominion in matters of Faith, if our Ambassage should be of an unlimited Nature, like the command

mand which *Tiberius* gave *Druſus* upon a certain expedition, *Nullis certis mandatis, ex re conſulturum*; that every man might have the power of a Plenipotentiary, and deliver what ſeems good in his own eyes; when every tittle of our Errand is comprized by God, ratified and confirmed from Heaven, and explicitely contained in the grand Charter of our Commiſſion; the Records of the Goſpel: So that as the Civil Law adjudgeth thoſe Ambaſſadors guilty of High Treaſon, who tranſcend the bounds and limits of their Commiſſion; and both Modern and Ancient Hiſtories Record, that ſuch preſumption hath received a juſt recompence of reward; the Apoſtles always accounted it a Sacrilege moſt horrid and inexcuſable in the ſight of their Maſter, and loaded that Perſon with a moſt dreadful *Anathema*, who ſhould preſume to broach his own Inventions, and to intermingle them with the Doctrine of the Goſpel, *Gal.* 1.8 9. If we, or an Angel from Heaven Preach any other Doctrine, then that ye have already received, let him be accurſed; which Apoſtolical Conſtitution is of equal Authority in the Church, to this very day; for in reference to that Text, is that gloſs of St. *Auſtin. Maledictus eſt qui quidpiam prædicat, præterquam, quod in Scripturis Legis and Evangelii recepimus.*

And if theſe things be true, what juſt indignation may the Maſter of our Religion conceive againſt the preſumption and boldneſs of the Church of *Rome*; which advanceth the Pope into His Tribunal, and aſcribes a like power, might and dominion to him, as to the eternal Son of God! For though Chriſt alone can inſtruct us in the Laws and Ordinances of his Kingdom, and by the influence of his Spirit direct us in the way of life; though that pretended Vicar of Chriſt

Christ be styled the Minister of our Lord, and in his Canons and Decrees subscribe himself; *Episcopus & servus Servorum Dei*; yet dares he proudly usurp the most proper Offices of his Master, and boldly assume the Title of Head of the Church: For he, as they confidently boast, hath received full Authority from Christ to deliver the whole will of God to the World; and to decide all Controversies in Religion, who, according to them, is certainly infallible, when he acts as Head of the Church, whom the Holy Ghost doth continually attend in Council, lawfully Summon'd, and in his Consistory assists him to Judge infallibly of Spiritual affairs; he hath Supremacy over the Souls of Men, can dispense with Divine Laws, dissolve mens Obligation of obedience to them, and secure their Persons from the wrath of God, which for their disobedience they justly deserve; he can constitute new Articles of Faith, and impose his definitions on the whole World, as Credentials necessary to mans Salvation; the Keys of Heaven are delivered to him, for though Christ alone opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens, *Rev.* 3. 7. Yet, by Succession to St. *Peter*, he dares Sit and Reign as Universal Soveraign, by his Papal Authority determining the Conditions of Life and Death; and according to mens observation of them, adjudging them to the one or other: as if he that Reigns in Heaven above, and Rules on Earth beneath, had ceased to execute his Kingly Office over the Church, and had derived it to St. *Peter*, as his immediate Successor, and to the Pope as Universal Vicar.

That these are indeed the Principles of the Church of *Rome*, and not the slanderous suggestion of Protestants, is apparently manifest, not only from the Writings of their private Doctors, but from the decretals

of their general Councils, and the most solemn Bulls of several Popes; in which they have acted so directly opposite to the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Gospel, that they have exercised Authority over Christ himself, and by their Traditions made the Gospel of Christ of no effect: Witness that Decree concerning the Canon of Scripture, in the Fourth Session of the Council of *Trent*, Celebrated under *Paul* the Third, wherein it was declared, that the Books of Apocrypha, and all their unwritten Traditions, are equally the Dictates of Gods Spirit with the most Canonical Scripture, and as necessary to confirm any Article of Faith, and to prescribe Rules for the regulating of manners; and therefore to be embraced with the like affection of Piety, and received with the same religious Reverence, under peril of the most dreadfull *Anathema*. And now I appeal to the judgment of any sober considerate man, whether such Doctrines as these are agreeable to the Tenor of the Gospel, and becoming the Ministers of Christ, or not rather highly derogatory to the dignity and honour of his Majesty, as being palpably erroneous, and horridly blasphemous; if tried by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which are the only Canon of Faith and good manners.

Synodus Libros Scriptos, & sine sc. traditiones, tanquam vel ore tenus a Christo, vel a Spiritu Sancto dictatas pari Pietatis affectu ac reverentiâ suscipit ac veneratur. Si quis autem sciens & prudens contempserit, Anathema sit.

We have hitherto considered the Doctrine of the Text; which was naturally contained in the two former Particulars; that the Apostles and all other Persons lawfully Consecrated into their Spiritual Office, *are the Ministers of Christ, and the Stewards of the Mysteries of God.* Now both the Nature of the precedeing Discourse, and the Order of the Method propounded, require our consideration concerning the last Particular; which contains Two practical Inferences deduced

ced from the truth of the Apoſtles Aſſertion: One reſpecting the men to whom theſe Perſons are employed as Miniſters and Stewards: *Let a man ſo account of Us*,-- The, other relating to the Perſons themſelves, to whom this Office is committed: *Moreover 'tis required in Stewards, that a man be found faithful*; both which are a compleat and neceſſary Application to our preſent diſcourſe, and require our moſt ſerious conſideration.

Firſt concerning the men to whom theſe Perſons are employed *as Miniſters and Stewards*; the Apoſtle delivers this exhortation, *Let a man ſo account of Us*; which words will eaſily admit of a double Expoſition, and thereby preſent the Laity with a Twofold duty concerning their reſpect and carriage to the Clergy. Firſt, That they ſet no greater value upon them. Secondly, That they account ſo worthily of them, *as of the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Goſpel.*

Firſt, That men ſet no greater value upon the Miniſters of the Goſpel, than what their Office and employment requires: *They are the Miniſters of Chriſt*, not Miniſters of their Peoples Conſciences: *They are the Stewards of God*, not Lords over any mens Faith; 'tis therefore unreaſonable for men to terminate their glory in the worth and excellency of thoſe that diſpenſe the Myſteries of Salvation; and a pride, not much inferior to that of *Herod*, for theſe to take ſuch honour to themſelves: It was this Oſtentation in the People, and this Ambition among ſome of the Clergy, that occaſioned thoſe Schiſms and Diviſions in the Church of *Corinth*, when the Chriſtian Converts in the Regions of *Achaia* adhered ſo implicitely to the Authority of thoſe Miniſters from whom they received the Faith, that they ſlighted and diſregarded the Preaching of others; whilſt they magnified the Di-

ſtates of their own Apoſtles, as men ſhould adore the Oracles of God: For this reaſon I conceive the Apoſtle ſo ſharply reproves their erroneous conceit, 1 *Cor.* 1. 13, 14. *Was* Paul *crucified for you? Or were you Baptized in the name of* Paul? *I thank God, I Baptized none of you, that men might not glory in my name*: Or elſe becauſe of thoſe gifts and excellencies, which they apprehended more eminent in one Apoſtle than in another, every one as his Fancy directed, admiring either *Paul* or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*. One extolling the powerfull plainneſs of *Paul*, whoſe diſcourſe was ſharp as a two-edged Sword, and his arguments nervous and weighty, the weapons of whoſe warfare were not carnal, but mighty to the pulling down of ſtrong holds. Another applauding the fulneſs of *Apollos*, as one that could entertain their minds with an ample variety of Heavenly Rhetorick, could expatiate upon the glory of Heaven, as if he ſaw the Gates of that *Jeruſalem* open and Chriſt Jeſus ſitting at the right hand of God, and inlarge upon the torments of Hell, as if he heard the languiſhing cryes, and ſaw the inſupportable miſeries of the Damned. A third admiring the ſolidity and perſpicuity of *Cephas*, who could explain the Oracles of God, and unriddle the Myſteries of Salvation to the life; the depth of Divinity he was able to fathom, and to render the moſt difficult points plain and intelligible; ſo much had the Spirit of Antichriſt poſſeſt the Spirit of the *Corinthians*, that they forgat the Lord their Redeemer, and refuſed not to glory in men, whilſt they neglected to render unto God the honour of their gifts and graces, and attributed it to the induſtry and endeavour of his Servants and his Stewards and Vaſſals, as if thoſe who were at beſt but the Miniſters of Chriſt and Stewards

wards of God had been the ſole Authors of their faith, and could infallibly finiſh their Salvation. But the Apoſtle ſo extremely diſliked the weakneſs and vanity of thoſe Perſons, that notwithſtanding their ſplendid profeſſion of the Chriſtian faith, and glorious oſtentation in their reſpective Miniſters, he confidently tells them they were ſo far from being Spiritually eminent in the Church, that they were but carnal men, and nothing Superior to the moſt imperfect Chriſtians, 1 *Cor.* 3. 1, 2, 3, 4. After which reprehenſion he ſubjoyns a moſt ſeaſonable Admonition to inſtruct the *Corinthians* and all Chriſtian profeſſors, with that juſt meaſure of honour and reſpect, which the Miniſters of Chriſt ſhould be entertained withall; that they are Servants of God, and Miniſters attending in the Church for mens Salvation; but their abilities are neither the endowments of Nature, nor the meer advantages of Education and induſtry; but all their ſufficiency is of God, who diſtributes to every man according to the pleaſure of his own will, and therefore the glory of mens Converſion to the Faith, of their Edification in it, and Salvation by reaſon of it; ſhould be attributed to God as the Principal efficient cauſe, who both preventeth his Miniſters in all their undertakings, and bleſſeth their labours with good ſucceſs; which is the ſubſtance of the Apoſtles argument, *Verſ.* 5, 6, 7. And is excellently illuſtrated by the Paraphraſe of the Learned Doctor *Hammond*, and the Marginal Annotations of *Junius* and *Tremelius*. Yet as if the Writing of the Apoſtles concerned not us, and the Church of Chriſt were in no great danger by the fond dotages and vain-glorious Oſtentation of Schiſmatical and Carnal Spirits;

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with what confidence and vigour have the Diviſions of the *Corinthians* been frequently renewed and reinforc'd upon the *Chriſtian* World, as if they were entailed to the Epiſtles of St. *Paul*, and were inſeparable Companions to the Goſpel of Chriſt? For alas! moſt wofull experience too plainly manifeſts, that thoſe who call upon the Name of Chriſt, and lay the greateſt claim to an intereſt in him, moſt wickedly arrogate that glory which is due to His Majeſty, to thoſe inſtruments who are men of like paſſions and infirmities with themſelves: For how common is it for Chriſtians to ſeparate, and ſtand at a more than ordinary diſtance from their fellow-Chriſtians; and when they have adopted themſelves into this or that Party, to cry up their Faction, as the only true Religion, to confine the Spirit of God within the Walls they Aſſemble; and to look with reproach, contempt and ſcorn upon thoſe that will not be as Schiſmatical in the Church and diſobedient to Governours as themſelves? So wretchedly do men abuſe their own Conſciences with the Vizor of an Hypocrital Zeal, and under the pretence of a ſingular Piety diſhonour the Chriſtian Religion, when they adhere to their Teachers more than Chriſt, adoring their Perſons, though never ſo Ignorant and unlearned, as if an Angel from Heaven were dropt down among them, like the Image of *Diana*, among the *Epheſians*, and implicitely aſſenting to whatever they deliver, though never ſo ridiculous and abſurd; as if the gods were come down to them in the likeneſs of men, or at leaſt they ſpake the very Oracles of God; of theſe men the Apoſtles long ſince Propheſied, 2 *Tim.* 4. 3, 4. *After their own luſts, ſhall men heap to themſelves Teachers*,

Teachers, having itching Ears, who ſhall turn away their Ears from the Truth, and be turned unto Fables: But my Brethren theſe things ought not ſo to be, there is one only Lawgiver, Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous, and who art thou that conſtituteſt another? 'Tis an excellent ſaying of *Nazianzen*, and extremely pertinent to our preſent judgment; I reverence *Peter*, yet will not I be called a *Petrian*: I honour *Paul*, yet will not I be called a *Paulian*: But the Aſſertion of *Lactantius*, though very ſevere, is undoubtedly true, *Chriſtiani eſſe deſierunt, qui Chriſti nomine amiſſo, humana and externa vocabula induerunt:* And indeed 'tis ſuch a reproach to Chriſtianity, for its Profeſſors to aſſume thoſe Ἐπιθετα, that as the Reverend Biſhop *Sanderſon* ſadly complained, *Non eſt dignus, qui ſit Chriſti, qui non eſt Unius Chriſti diſcipulus.*

Orat. 30.

Inſtit. L. 4. c. 30.

De Conſc. Præl. P. 3.

But if men did ſeriouſly deſign the Peace of their own Conſciences, or the proſperity of the Church and State in which they live, they would rejoyce exceedingly in the Name of Chriſtians alone, would reverently obſerve the lawfull Conſtitutions of a well ſettled National Church, and embrace Chriſtianity in its purity and ſimplicity, without any ſiniſter reſpect to Parties and Diviſions. I heartily wiſh that the Sons of the Church of *England*, do neither by their flattery or puſillanimity, their connivance or lukewarmneſs contribute any thing to theſe ſad diſtractions in this Nation; and I humbly beg that they will moſt ſeriouſly declaim againſt, and ſincerely endeavour to ſuppreſs ſuch extravagant vanities in the Religion of their Auditors, and that the People of this Kingdom would once be perſuaded into this neceſſary piece of Chriſtian Prudence,

not

not to think of their Teachers more than they ought, but whatever Reverence they bear to their Persons, however fair and plausible their reasonings may seem to their weak understandings, to let none of their Stratagems deceive their Souls, nor a Multitude of Words to sway their Judgments to make unjust separations in the body of Christs Church, to affront the Authority of the lawful Powers, by which under God they are protected; much less to be perverted from any one Article in the Christian Faith, or to receive any Doctrine that overthrows it; for this is the Command of him, who is the only Potentate, and Lord over Heaven and Earth, *Mat.* 23. 6, 7, 9. *Though your Patriots love the uppermost Rooms at Feasts, and the chief seats in the Synagogues, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi; yet call no man your Father upon the Earth, for one is your Father, which is in Heaven.*

2. The Exhortation of the Apostles admits of this Exposition, that men account so worthily of these Persons, *As the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of God*; as those denominations, are applied to Ministers which denote their servitude and subjection to Christ, so the same and other Titles of honour are attributed to them; which import some Power and Authority inherent in them; thus Ἀπόστολοι denotes their Dignity and Commission in the Government of the Church; for as in Temporal Kingdoms, when Rulers or Procurators are sent into any Province, they receive Authority to regulate the affairs thereof, as Deputies or Vicegerents to their Soveraign Lord; so Christ sent forth his Apostles with Commission to Succeed him in the Administration of the Government of his Spiritual Kingdom, to execu

in his Name ſeveral Offices in the Church, which he in Perſon performed when he was converſant with it, thereof they are called by the Holy Ghoſt, προεστῶτες, 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. Ἡγούμενοι, *Heb.* 13. 17. δυνάμεις, χαρισμάτα, 1 *Cor.* 12. 28. Of like ſignification is that honourable Appellation of πρέσβεις, which reſpects the eminent Dignity of the Miniſterial Officers, who are employed by the Prince of Heaven, as his Ambaſſadors to Treat and Negotiate with the Sons of of Men, concerning the Myſterious affairs of his glorious Kingdom: For ſo the *Romans* gave the Title of Legates to thoſe Perſons, who were inveſted with Dignity to repreſent their Maſters Perſon, and with Authority to manage their Commiſſion with Foreign States; which employment as it highly advanceth the Dignity of theſe Officers, ſo it juſtly requires from men an honourable reſpect to their Meſſage, and a Reverend eſtimation of their Perſons; and for this St. *Paul* commends his beloved *Corinthians*, becauſe of their kindneſs and obedience to *Titus*, that out of reſpect to his Spiritual Function, with fear and trembling they had received him, 2 *Cor.* 7. 15. In conformity to which practice, the Apoſtle frequently inſerts an Exhortation of the ſame Nature, as a neceſſary injunction to the Church, 1 *Theſ.* 5. 12, 13. We beſeech you Brethren to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and to eſteem them very highly in love for their works ſake; and *Heb.* 13. 17. Obey them that have the Rule over you, and ſubmit your ſelves, for they watch for your Souls, as they that muſt give account: and from hence St. *Ignatius* Exhorting the Church of *Smyrna*, to Unity and Order,

πάντες τῷ Ἐπισκόπῳ ἀκολουθεῖτε, ὡς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς τῷ πατρὶ· καὶ τῷ πρεσβυτερίῳ ὡς τοῖς ἀποστόλοις· τοὺς δὲ διακόνους ἐντρέπεσθε ὡς θεοῦ ἐντολήν. &c. *Epist. ad Smyrn.* p. 6.

presents them with that repect, which is due to the Officers of the Church, as a proper expedient thereto. Let the Bishop be obeyed as your Spiritual Father; the *Presbytery*, as the Apostles of Christ; and the Deacons rever'd in obedience to the Command of God; let nothing be done without the Bishops appointment.

I must confess that the best of us are but men of like Passions and infirmities with others, and consequently many imperfections through the degeneracy of humane Nature are in us unavoidable, and perhaps there may be some in sacred Orders very disorderly in their lives and profane in their Manners; such as should adorn the soundness of their Doctrines by the holiness of their Conversations, but bring it into contempt and derision by their unholy and vitious courses; yet so long as their Doctrines are sound and Orthodox, and till they are suspended from their Office by lawfull Authority, (which is heartily to be wisht) they stand in Christs stead, who hath extended his Precept concerning this very purpose to the vilest of men, that People should follow the good Doctrine of their Teachers, not the evil example of their Lives and Actions, *Mat.* 23. 2, 3. So that though the Person for his immoralities deserve to be degraded into the lowest Rank of Christians, according to the Twenty Fifth of the Apostles Canons, and upon continued disobedience after sufficient admonition, to be expelled the Christian Church, *Mat.* 18. 17. Yet 'tis easie to distinguish his Office and Employment from his personal vices, and necessary to respect him for his Works sake.

But

But I may return from this digreſſion, and take up a juſt reprehenſion againſt an impudent Generation of Men, who are not afraid to abuſe the Meſſengers of Chriſt, and to confront the Meſſage delivered by them; ſuch as deride and affront their Perſons, as if they were the refuſe and off-ſcouring of the World, and indeavour by Sacrilege and injuſtice to deprive them of their competent and neceſſary Allowance, which the Laws of God have commanded in general, and the contribution of charitable friends with the juſt Authority of the civil Powers have preſcribed in Particular; moſt contrary to the Canon of the Apoſtle, 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. 18. *That thoſe who labour in the Word and Doctrine, be counted worthy of double honour, for the labourer is worthy of his reward*: And an Ordinance of Chriſt himſelf, 1 *Cor.* 9. 14. *That they which preach the Goſpel ſhould live of the Goſpel.* Such as refuſe to attend to his Ambaſſage though of Divine Authority, and neglect to conſider the grand importance of it, though he ſpeak the very Oracles of God, and diſcourſe to them of the Kingdom of Heaven: Such as ſcorn to endure the reproof of their Miniſter, though never ſo juſt and neceſſary, and are inraged at his reprehenſions, though uſhered with meekneſs, wiſdom, and gravity; whoſe affections are ſo corrupt, and their Spirits ſo haughty, that they become his enemies, becauſe he tells them the Truth, and if the Power of their hand were equal to the Paſſion of their hearts, would Parellel the Oppreſſion of *Ahab*, the Impiety of *Jehoiakim*, or the Cruelty of *Herod*; *Et alia inſunt ſtolida & vana, vel ſi mollius acciperes miſeranda, ſed non ad invidiam iſta, verum conciliandæ miſericordiæ refero*: Which *Epiphonema* of the Hiſtorian, may be expoun-

ed by the words of the Apoſtle in the Language of the Holy Ghoſt; we are made a Spectacle unto the World, to Angels, and to men, we are fools for Chriſts ſake, being deſpiſed and reviled, I ſpeak not theſe things to ſhame our enemies, but as a faithful Miniſter of Chriſt to warn and remember them, 1 *Cor.* 4.19. *&c.*

Father forgive them, they know not what they do, they conſider not what reproach and affront, they caſt upon thy Son our Maſter, when they contemn and diſhonour us his immediate Servants; which yet our Lord hath expreſly ſignified, *Luk.* 10.16. *He that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me, and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me.* But that we may be perſwaded better things of the People in our ſeveral charges, may this Petition be inſerted into our daily Litany, that they will cheerfully aſcend to the Houſe of God, to recieve inſtruction; will attend with reverence and devotion to our Words of Exhortation, will impartially examine and ſeriouſly conſider the rational importance of our Doctrines and Admonitions, and either friendlily inform us, if any Error or Corruption fall from us; or if we ſpeak the truth in Chriſt, and lie not, faithfully believe, and ſincerely obey us. But whether Men will hear, or whether they will forbear, let us remember the Vocation, whereto we are called, that arming our ſelves with the reſolution of St. *Paul, That ther Bonds nor afflictions ſhall move us: neither will we count our life dear unto us, ſo that we may finiſh our Courſe with joy, and the Miniſtry we have received of the Lord Jeſus*, We may attain the Chriſtian ſimplicity and courage of that bleſſed Apoſtle, *And approve our ſelves the faithful Miniſters of Chriſt, and good Stewards of the Myſteries of God.*

Acts 20.24.

2 Cor.6.4. &c.

Which

Which is the Second Inference delivered in the Text, and reſpects the Perſons, who are the Miniſters and Stewards of the Goſpel, that they be faithfull in diſcharge of their Office commited to them: *Moreover 'tis required in Stewards, that a man be found faithfull*; the juſt deſign of which Exhortation will be fully anſwered by them, if they be endowed with theſe two qualifications. Firſt, A good underſtanding of their Office and Employment. Secondly, A good Conſcience in the diſcharge and performance of it.

Firſt, A good underſtanding of their Office and Employment, *is neceſſary in the Stewards of God, that they be found faithfull*; for 'tis impoſſible that men be faithfull in their Stewardſhip, whoſe intellectuals are Naturally defective, or their underſtanding, though capable of improvement, yet rude and ignorant in the knowledge of their duty. How can they diſcharge the Office of Teachers, that have need to be taught the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God? Or how can thoſe Perſons inſtruct their People in the Myſteries of Religion, that are Novices in the Faith of Chriſt, and know not thoſe Canons by which the Houſe of God is to be ruled? and how ſhall they then take care of the Church to preſerve it pure and undefiled, or be able by ſo und Doctrine to exhort and convince the gainſayer? 'Tis our Saviours obſervation, if the blind lead the blind, they ſhall both fall into the Ditch: So neceſſary 'tis that the Miniſters of Religion be themſelves ſufficiently inſtructed, that they may communicate to others in all Spiritual knowledge: And as the *Lacedæmonians* called the Governours of their City, Ἁρμοσας, becauſe they framed the diſpoſitions, and faſhioned the manners of their Subjects according to the Laws of their

their repective Communities; and the Wise *Athenians* for the same reason gave their Rulers the same denomination, and styled them Ἀγωνοθέται, because they constituted good and wholesom Laws for the direction of the People, and used most prevalent means to have them observed. So God that Soveraign Lord of his People hath given the like Appellations to the Deputies in his Church, the Ministers of Spiritual affairs, as Seers, Prophets, Overseers and Stewards, that from the signification of their Name, they may be put in remembrance of their duty, that the Preists lips should preserve knowledge, and the People should seek the Law at their mouths.

What the Office of a Minister in general is, hath been already discoursed, when we considered that *depositum* committed to his charge, and for whose service it should be employed, the substance of which is, that the whole will of God concerning mans Salvation be faithfully delivered and explain'd, as 'tis contained in the Gospel of Christ; the particular Offices, wherein this general duty is to be performed are briefly comprehended in those short instructions recommended to the Ministers of Christ in their Ordinations; to them are committed the blessed Sacraments of the Christian Religion, that as opportunity serves, and necessity requireth, they Administer those Sacred Rites in the Church of God, by Baptizing such as are duly disposed for that Solemn Ordinance and distributing the Holy Communion to those pious and humble Souls that are Religiously disposed to celebrate the honour of God in that Sacred Institution; and into their hands the S. Sc: are put, who are Commanded to Solemnize the worship of God in publick, either as Priests

Mat. 28. 19. *1 Cor.* 11. 24, 25.

Priests to wait at the Altar of the Lord, to intercede with his Majesty in the behalf of the People, and to present in their stead, Prayers, and supplications and thanksgivings to him; this St. *Paul* gave in charge to *Timothy*, 1 *Tim.* 2. 1, 2. And for this reason that great Apostle so frequently inserts his Petitions in his Epistles to his beloved Converts, protesting that he should sin against God, if he neglected to pray for them, and resolving never to omit so necessary a duty; and upon this accout those publick Offices were composed in the Primitive Church, and Hours of Prayer appointed that the Priests might almost continually be praying for the People; according to which practice 'tis commanded by our Church, that the Ministers of Religion offer up a Morning and Evening Sacrifice to the Throne of Grace, in the publick Service and Liturgy of our Church, which in all Cathedral Churches, and Collegiate Chapels is duly observed; or as Ambassadors to treat with the People in the business of Religion, and reveal the Will of their Maker to them, faithfully explaining the Gospel in its true and proper sence, and framing their discourses according to the qualities and capacities of their Auditors, that their understandings may be well informed in the Principles of Religion, and their hearts strongly confirmed in the Faith; to warn sinners of the evil of their ways, and to Preach up the duties of a Practical Religion, to present them with the most convincing Reasons and powerfull Exhortations to a good Life, if by any means, the hearts of men may be inclined to the love, and their lives to the practice of an universal Piety. Hitherto may be referred that necessary Office of Catechizing the Christian youth by some short and familiar Questions

ſtions concerning the Eſſential parts of Religion, which if duly performed by the Miniſters of Religion, would in a great meaſure prevent that infidelity and profaneneſs, ſo ſcandalous and offenſive in the Chriſtian Church, even by thoſe which are arrived to the uſe of Reaſon, and the exerciſe of their underſtanding: For this purpoſe, that admirable *Compendium* of the Chriſtian Religion, the Catechiſm of our Church is commanded to be learned by every Baptized Perſon, before he be confirmed by the Biſhop, that he may be able to give an account of his Faith, before he be admitted to the Holy Communion.

But the duty of a Miniſter is ſtill of larger extent. The Apoſtle tells us, and experience too truly manifeſts what buſie Agents the Emiſſaries of Satan are to diſſeminate the Doctrine of Devils, and to ſpread abroad moſt damnable Errors; of which ſort are they that creep into private Houſes, and lead Captive ſilly Women, laden with divers luſts, and thoſe falſe Teachers, who being unruly and vain Talkers and Deceivers, call in Queſtion the moſt undeniable Principles of Religion, and turn the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs, whoſe folly ſhould be made manifeſt to all men, and their mouths ſtopt, that they proceed no further; which is certainly the duty of thoſe men, to whom the word of God is committed, that they may be able by ſound Doctrine to convince and reclaim the gainſayer, *Tit.* 1. 5, 9. For 'tis abſurd to conceive, that the care and vigilance of Miniſters whoſe employment is to watch over Souls, and to endeavour their Salvation, may without affront to their Lord and Maſter be inferiour to the pains and ſolicitude of thoſe Seducers, whoſe buſineſs is to tempt and intice men to ſin, and

the

thereby to aſcertain their eternal Damnation. So that 'tis undoubtedly their Office by Private inſtruction and admonition as well as by Publick, to contend earneſtly for the Faith of Chriſt, againſt the clamorous and impertinent cavils of malicious Spirits and falſe Apoſtels; to ſtudy the preſervation of the Truth in the hearts of thoſe unhappy Perſons that are aſſaulted by them, that they neither embrace the Errors of thoſe men, nor fall into a ſtate of ſin and Death; and to wreſtle with God by their moſt fervent and importunate prayers, till their People are delivered from the ſnares of the Devil, and their Souls confirmed in the way of life; thus St. *Paul*, when he had called together the Elders at *Miletus*, committed to them, the Flock of God, and warned them of falſe Teachers, that they faithfully watch againſt their Invaſions, leaſt they draw away Diſciples after them, *Acts.* 20. 28, 29, 30, 31.

Add to all this, the groſs Ignorance of many, which cryes aloud for Perſonal inſtruction; the open Prophaneſs of others, which ſtands in need of the moſt ſerious Admonitions, and ſeaſonable Reprehenſions from their Spiritual Guides; and always the Viſitation of the Sick is incumbent on them, who according to thier various conditions require the moſt affectionate Exhortations and convincing Arguments to confirm their Patience, to increaſe their Faith, to quicken thier Hope, to compleat their Repentance, and to perfect their Charity: All which the Apoſtle hath Ordained as a perpetual Office in the Church, *James* 5. 14. *Is any man ſick among you? let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, and the prayer of Faith ſhall ſave the ſick.* All which

particulars are briefly recommended to the Care and endeavour of *Polycarp* Biſhop of *Smyrna*, by *Ignatius* Biſhop of *Antioch*, and comprehended in the Epiſtle of *Polycarp* to the *Presbyters* of *Philippi*, as their neceſſary and indiſpenſable Offices: Theſe are the ſeveral parts of the Miniſters Office, and are therefore neceſſary to be known by the Stewards of God, that by theſe Spiritual Miniſtries, they may faithfully diſcarge their duty in the Family and Houſhold of Chriſt.

And ſo I proceed to the Second branch of the Apoſtles Exhortation to the Miniſters of Chriſt, *viz.* A good Conſcience in the diſcharge and performance of their Office. And if the Solemnity of our Ordination, or the Injunction of our Lord and Maſter; if the manifold Advantages which our faithfulneſs will infallibly effect, or the ſevere Account we muſt render to God concerning our Stewardſhip; if any or all of theſe have any weight and importance in them, they lay the ſtricteſt Obligation upon us, to engage our faithfulneſs in the work of the Miniſtry. For in our Ordination we received Authority to preach the Goſpel, and explain the Scriptures, to Adminiſter the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies belonging to the Church; and when we received Inſtitution from our Dioceſan, were ſtrictly enjoyned to watch over the Flock of Chriſt, of which we were oppointed Overſeers; and if the Goſpel of our bleſſed Saviour be of Divine Authority, what variety of Precepts are then delivered by God himſelf? There being neither an Evangeliſt, nor an Apoſtle, but from the Spirit of the Lord preſcribes our Duty, and requires our Fidelity: Beſides, the

the Glory of God is extremely concerned; the Salvation of our People lyes at Stake, and our own everlasting Doom most certainly depends upon the faithful Discharge or wretched Neglect of our Office and Employment. For by the strength of this Argument St. *Paul* exhorts *Timothy*, to discharge his duty, with the greatest care and a good Conscience. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his Kingdom, that thou observe these things, 1 *Tim.* 5. 21. 2 *Tim.* 4. 1.

But because he that is unjust in his own affairs will scarce be faithfull in Administring the goods of others; I mean if our Consciences be loose and treacherous in ordering our own lives, we shall discover but little Conscience in prescribing Rules and Directions to others; or if we do employ our knowledge and our strength to explain the Mysteries of Salvation to the Souls committed to our charge, we cannot challenge a Blessing from God upon our endeavours, nor rationally expect that our labours should be successful; for God himself hath taken up a quarrel against such men, *Psal.* 50. 16, 17——*Unto the wicked saith God, What hast thou to do, to declare my Statutes, or to take my Covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee? therefore I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thy eyes.* And the Apostle assures us that such men are inexcusable before God, and that his Sacred Name is blasphemed by them, *Rom.* 2. 1, 17---24. And as our People may justly upbraid the Indecency and absurdity of our Lives, when our Actions confront our Doctrines, and our

Manners give our Preaching the Lye, as St. *Jerome* hath obſerved, *Perdit Authoritatem docendi, cujus Sermo opere deſtruitur*; ſo they may be provoked to reproach and contemn the Goſpel it ſelf, as an unholy Inſtitution, or a fabulous Legend; like thoſe in *Salvian*'s time, *Si Chriſtus Sancta docuiſſet, Chriſtiani Sanctè vixiſſent.* Of what great concernment is it then, that we demonſtrate our knowledge in the ſound Myſteries of Religion, by our Reverent apprehenſions of them, and a Religious deportment in the whole courſe and frame of our actions, correſpondent to them? That every Article of the Chriſtian Faith, of whoſe truth we labour to perſuade our People, be influential upon our Practices in ſuch proportion, that if there come in one that believeth not, or one that is unlearned, into our Aſſemblies; he may be convinced, and falling down on his face worſhip God, and report that God is in us of a truth: And every Precept in the Body of Chriſtianity, which we binde upon the Conſciences of men, and exhort them to practice, may be delineated ſo fairly in our Lives and Converſations, that *others ſeeing our good works may glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.* Such was the faithfulneſs of our Apoſtle in this particular, that without any remorſe he could take the *Philippians* by the hand, and lead them to the Practice of every good work, by the conduct of his own Example; *Brethren be ye followers together of me, and mark them which walk ſo, as ye have us for an example*, Phil. 3. 17. And in his Epiſtle to theſe, he appeals to their own Conſciences, to judge in what manner of Converſation he walked among them, 1 *Theſ.* 2. 1. 10. *Your ſelves, Brethren, know*

1 Cor. 14. 24, 25.

know our entrance unto you, and ye are Witneſſes, and God alſo, how juſtly, and holily, and unblameably, we behaved our ſelves among you: for which reaſon *Salvian* ſo highly and deſervedly commends him, *Boni Domini bonus famulus, & ſingularis Magiſtri præclarus imitator.* Lib. 3. de Jub. Dei. P. 78.

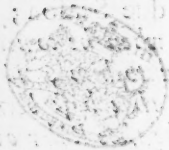
And now, Brethren, we ſee our Calling; and are we Conſcientious in the management of it? We have heard our Profeſſion; and are our Practices anſwerable to it? We cannot, I am ſure, be ignorant of thoſe Arguments, that oblige our Faithfulneſs, and do they preſwade us to a conſtant Univerſal Obedience? Or are not the beſt of us too little ſerious in the work of the Miniſtry; and therefore our labours the leſs ſucceſsful Do we perſuade our People in the Myſteries of Godlineſs, and preſs them to unfeigned Repentance, and uniform Obedience to the Laws of Heaven, as men that know the terrors of the Lord, and believe without theſe things our Auditors ſhall periſh Eternally? Do we intreat, exhort and beſeech them as it were for their Lives and Salvation? Or do we count our Office a burden, and ſubſtituting others into our Stewardſhip, are indifferent what Perſons labour in the Vineyard, ſo we may eat the Fruit thereof, and receive the Profits in their appointed Seaſon? Do none of us by our ſcandalous lives diſgrace the Goſpel we Preach, and ſo offend our weaker Brethren, by laying a ſtumbling Block in their way to Heaven, and ſcandalizing them by our licentious Courſes?

I come not into this place to Caluminate any, much leſs to accuſe my Fathers, and my Brethren; this work

work I refer to the ſcrutiny of every mans Conſcience, and the Inquiſition of our Spiritual Governours. And I heartily wiſh that every Miniſter in this Aſſembly after the ſtricteſt Examination will be found to have approved himſelf a faithfull and wiſe Steward in the Houſe of God; that our care is to rertench the ſins and impieties, and to repair the Schiſms and Diviſions in the places were we live: that we are obedient to the voice of our exact Conformity to her Laws and Canons, and Brotherly kindneſs to one another; that in our Inſtructions and Exhortations, we diſplay the odious Nature of ſin in its proper colours, that ſinners may bluſh, and be aſhamed at their prophane and vicious courſes: And uſe the moſt prevalent Rhetorick to ſet forth Vertue to the life, to repreſent it with our utmoſt skill in the moſt amiable and lovely attire, that men may be drawn as with Cords of love to Court and embrace her; and above all theſe things, that we keep our ſelves unſpotted from the ſins of the World, for hereunto are we called, to be blameleſs and harmleſs, as the Sons of God, without rebuke, that our Converſations may be living Sermons, and our Sermons the lively Oracles of God.

Theſe are the qualifications to make us faithfull Stewards in the Church of God: We muſt be Wiſe to underſtand the Myſteries of Religion, leſt we be deceived by the Stratagems and Sophiſtry of Impoſters; and Faithfull, leſt we ſeduce and delude others: We muſt be Learned in the word of God, that in our Doctrines we may ſhew Incorruptneſs, Gravity, Sincerity, and ſound ſpeech, that cannot be condemned; and Conſcientious in Preaching the ſame,

that

that he who is of the contrary part may be aſhamed; and thoſe that gainſay the faithfull Word of God, by the ſoundneſs of our Doctrines and faithfulneſs of our Labours may be convinc'd. Who then is a faithful and wiſe Servant, whom his Lord hath made Ruler over his Houſhold to give them meat in due Seaſon; *Bleſſed is that Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh ſhall find ſo doing: For he ſhall ſay unto him, Well done thou good and faithfull Servant, thou haſt been faithfull over a few things, I will make thee Ruler over many things; enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

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